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ABSTRACT

This paper presents initial findings from a 2-year study to identify the core knowledge and skills necessary to teach in a standards-based system. The study was part of the Standards-Based Teacher Education Project (STEP), which focused on the development of frameworks and materials for preservice and practicing teachers. High school teachers and higher education faculty formed "co-development teams" in each of six disciplines committed to implementation of standards-based instruction and assessment in one or more of their classes. In collaborative work groups, they shared pedagogical practices, broadened content knowledge, and learned new ways to engage students in learning. Culminating statewide institutes in the spring of 1997 and 1998 provided the opportunity for co-development teams to cross-score classroom performance assessments, determine levels of student proficiency, and verify one another's judgments of proficiency. This paper summarizes initial findings from participants' reflective inquiry. The study found that the voices of STEP teachers engaged in the actual implementation of standards provided clear imperatives for those who formulate educational policy and design teacher preparation and professional development programs. The overarching imperative is that teachers are the primary agents of school reform and should be included in all stages of design, implementation, and improvement of the standards-based system. (Contains 47 references.) (SM)

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Teaching in a Standards-Based System: How Teachers' Voices Can Influence Policy, Preparation, and Professional Development

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Teaching in a Standards-based System: How Teachers' Voices Can Influence Policy, Preparation and Professional Development

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

This paper presents some of the initial findings from a two-year study to identify the core knowledge and skills necessary to teach in a standards-based system. This study was part of the Standards-based Teacher Education Project (STEP) which focused on the development of frameworks and materials for pre-service and practicing teachers. High school teachers and higher education faculty formed "co-development teams" in each of six disciplines committed to the implementation of standards-based instruction and assessment in one or more of their classes. In collaborative work groups, they shared pedagogical practices, broadened their content knowledge, and learned new ways to engage students in learning. Culminating statewide institutes in the spring of 1997 and 1998 provided the opportunity for co-development teams to cross-score classroom performance assessments, determine levels of student proficiency and verify one another's judgements of proficiency. We summarize initial findings from participants' reflective inquiry and suggest implications for policy makers, teacher educators, professional developers, and educational researchers who are involved in standards-based reform.

Oregon's Reform Movement: Standards from a K-16 Perspective

Oregon's reform movement is driven by a policy framework that links the implementation of standards and assessments with teacher pre-service preparation and continuing professional development. The state also has a unique K-16 perspective, as the only state in the nation with board adopted standards aligning student performance in elementary, middle, and high school with college admissions.

Four major initiatives frame this integrated vision of a seamless standards system bound to teacher preparation and professional development. First, the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, passed in 1991 (amended in 1995) mandated the design and implementation of a comprehensive system of content and performance standards and assessments benchmarked at grades 3, 5, 8 and 10. Students earn Certificates of Initial Mastery (CIM at grade 10) and

Advanced Mastery (CAM at grade 12+) by demonstrating proficiency on state tests and classroom performance assessments that are aligned with the standards. Second, in response to this legislative initiative, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education adopted a policy in 1994 to develop a proficiency-based admission standards system for entry into the state's seven public universities linked with these K-12 standards and assessments. The Joint Boards, comprised of the Oregon Board of Education (pre-school, K-12, community colleges) and the Oregon State Board of Higher Education (public universities), formally adopted this alignment and a timeline for implementation in March 1998.

The remaining two framing initiatives recognize teachers' critical role in policy as agents of implementation of standards-based reform. In 1997, the Oregon State Legislature unanimously enacted Senate Bill 124 with the support of the Teachers Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC—the state licensing agency), the Joint Boards of Education and educational leaders across the state. This new design addresses the preparation of teachers for Oregon's standards-based schools and includes three-year initial and five-year continuing teaching licenses. The practicing teacher has a significant role in designing and documenting a Continuing Professional Development Plan (CPD) that addresses six domains of professional competence. The CPD along with successful teaching provides evidence to initiate and renew teaching licenses. Finally, Oregon's Senate Bill 880 further links student learning to teacher performance by replacing guarantees of tenure with two-year contracts and renewals based on proven ability in standards-based teaching (TSPC, 1999).

Assessments from a K-16 Perspective: The Role of Teacher Judgement

While the policy framework provides the broad brushstrokes for a standards-based system, the aligned K-16 standards and resulting assessment system create a complex mandate for classroom teachers as agents of implementation. At the classroom level, the culture of standards and performance assessments challenges traditional teacher practice and moves the once private act of judging student performance into the public arena as multiple choice tests provide only part of the accountability picture.

The Oregon State Assessment System for K-12 consists of three parts: (a) state multiple choice tests of content knowledge (e.g. life science, physical science), (b) classroom work

samples (e.g. scientific inquiry), and (c) on-demand performance tasks graded by other teachers at the state level (e.g. writing to a prompt: My most memorable experience…). In four content areas, scoring guides assist teachers in determining student proficiency in core cognitive processes that are the "gateway" for student acquisition of knowledge in these disciplines: writing (English), problem solving (mathematics), scientific inquiry (science) and social science analysis (social science). These scoring guides provide the framework for teacher judgement of student performance on classroom work samples and on-demand performance tasks. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) assumes responsibility for structuring multiple choice and on-demand performance assessments, and for monitoring student performance in these four disciplines while leaving the determination of proficiency in second languages and visual and performing arts to the discretion of local districts. Linked to this K-12 assessment system is admission into higher education via the Proficiency-based Admissions Standards System (PASS).

PASS requires that students demonstrate proficiency in all six content areas through a combination of multiple choice tests (national and state) and "collections of evidence." These collections include classroom tasks, performances (e.g. oral interviews in second languages), teacher-made tests, and long term projects (e.g. research paper, scientific investigation). The Oregon University System (OUS) assumes responsibility for structuring the framework of proficiencies and accompanying criteria for proficient performance. However, classroom teachers, as agents of implementation, are responsible for teaching to the standards and working with students to generate collections of evidence that indicate sufficiency (the range of work addresses the criteria for meeting the standard) and proficiency (the performance on that work is at the level necessary for college entry coursework). PASS collections in English, mathematics, science, and social science for college admission generally contain work samples that are assessed with state scoring guides and that are also used to meet high school requirements for the Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery. In order to study the comparability of teacher judgement, the PASS staff convenes "Verification Institutes," where teachers cross score collections of work, determine the level of student proficiency and compare their judgments with those of their colleagues. Unlike most states where K-12 teachers are engaged in similar cross scoring activities, Oregon's emerging system of standards and assessments relies heavily on teacher judgement of student proficiency across the K-16 system.

Tell, Bodone, and Addie (1999). *Teaching in a Standards-based System: How Teachers' Voices Can Influence Policy, Preparation and Professional Development*

Providing a Forum for the Voices of Implementation – Classroom Teachers

Beginning in 1994, the directors of PASS relied on high school teachers as well as higher education faculty to assist with the design of standards and assessments for admission into the state's seven public institutions. Successive iterations of PASS standards and criteria have resulted from numerous collegial reviews and Verification Institutes attended by community college and university faculty and approximately 300 teachers representing over half the high schools in Oregon. While the design of PASS required extensive teacher and faculty input, the actual implementation of this complex policy initiative linked to K-12 reform, required changes in classroom practice. The Standards-based Teacher Education Project (STEP) was undertaken to determine the knowledge and skills necessary to teach in a standards-based system. Over a two-year period, 44 high school teachers and university faculty participated in a reflective study of their professional practice. The intent was that the actual experience of practitioners engaged in implementation could inform the further development of teacher preparation programs and materials, continuing professional development and policies related to standards implementation.

Using practitioner experience as a referent for policy implementation is both pragmatic and practical given that teachers are the agents of implementation held to high levels of accountability for successful student performance in ambitious systemic reform efforts such as Oregon's. Policymakers may fail to acknowledge teachers as initiators of change who are able to define problems and devise solutions (Tyack and Cuban, 1995; Schulman and Sykes, 1983). The exclusion of such voices is both perplexing and problematic. When they view teachers simply as a "conduit for instructional policy, not as an actor" policymakers tend to "invest a great deal more in the creation of control systems for teaching than they do in the development of teacher knowledge" (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 345). By contrast, enlisting the support and skills of teachers as key actors in reform might be seen as a positive kind of tinkering, adapting knowledgeably to local needs and circumstances, preserving what is valuable and correcting what is not (Tyack and Cuban, 1995).

A one-dimensional "top-down" approach to policy implementation invites failure by disengagement (McLaughlin, 1987). As one STEP social science teacher from a high school aptly stated: "Never underestimate the ability of teachers to stonewall or sabotage change imposed. We can all adopt a new terminology, series of reporting forms, and then go back to our

classrooms, close our doors, and do exactly what we've always done." Even though teachers may have full discretion over decision making within their classroom walls, they are often excluded from management decisions beyond these walls (Shedd and Bacharach, 1991). In essence, they may be relegated to the status of "lower participants" in the formal organization of their school, whose voices are "difficult to assess" by those who are in positions of authority (LeCompte, 1993, p.10). Or, as Gitlin and Meyers (1993) suggest:

> Teachers' stories are rarely given a forum in the public domain. This is not particularly surprising given that teachers often are not expected to formulate policy or influence the direction of educational practice but rather are expected to take the wisdom of others and find ways to put these theories into practice. (pp. 51-52)

In stark contrast to this culture of disengagement, STEP provided a forum for the voices of teachers engaged in the implementation of standards (Bodone, 1997). Teachers, it was reasoned, could through careful study of their own practice, clearly articulate the knowledge and skills needed for teaching in a standards-based classroom. The "legitimate knowledge" (Gitlin et al., 1992) generated through this reflective and collaborative work could then best inform the design of teacher preparation programs, professional development and policies guiding teacher education and accountability.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

> The concern with *voice* has come to have special relevance for the place teachers occupy and the role they play in school restructuring and reform and in how research knowledge about teachers and their work is generated. What part do teachers play? What say do they have in educational change? How well or poorly are their perspectives represented in the discourse of policy and research on education? These are issues to which the concept of *voice* speaks especially well. (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 12)

The words of Andy Hargreaves are particularly relevant to our work with high school teachers and higher education faculty engaged in the implementation of standards and assessments within their own classrooms. The voices of individuals actively engaged in such reform efforts

illuminate the possibilities and challenges inherent during implementation (Bodone, 1997). We approached our study from the belief expressed by McLaughlin (1987) that

> organizations don't innovate or implement change, individuals do. Individuals responsible for carrying out a policy act not only from institutional incentives, but also from professional and personal motivation. Change is ultimately a problem of the smallest unit. (p.174)

With that in mind, we consider the general concept of voice, teachers' voices, their place in qualitative and educational research, and the possibilities as well as limitations.

The Concept of Voice

The concept of voice has become significant over the last two decades in philosophical and theoretical discourses such as postmodernism (Giroux, 1992; hooks, 1992; McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993), feminism (Middleton, 1993; Patai, 1988), and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Kanpol, 1994). Following these lines of reasoning, the individual (the self) is the engine of the discussion, the principal informant of what is going on. Individual voices are spoken out, each holding their own truth and value (Bodone, 1997). In those interpretive thinking processes the event is eventless unless voices talk about it and attach a special significance to it (Middleton, 1993).

Beyond the testimonies and stories that voices can tell there is the breaking of a long silence which, historically, has affected groups of people in our societies whose lives and thoughts about those same lives, have been given little or no attention. Coming out of this silence is the first step towards recognition from others. What is very important is that voices are *heard*, as emphasized by bell hooks (1989):

> The challenge for teachers, as well as for other silenced groups, is not to emerge from silence to speech, but to change the nature and direction of our speech. To make a speech that compels listeners, one that is *heard.* (as cited in Gitlin, 1994, p. 192)

Once voices are heard, they cannot be ignored. They exist and are part of the discourse. Or are they really? Qualitative research has *voice* in the center of its design and with it numerous

ethical and philosophical discussions among qualitative researchers about validity, authenticity, whose voice it is, ownership of the text, etc. Too often, the voice(s) of informants (or researched) is taken for granted: we (researchers) hear it, but do we really listen to it? And if we do, what do we do with it? Do we interpret it or do we give it a chance to be expressed in its entirety, for its own worth and sake? Or do we simply replace it? (Bodone, 1997) To this particular point, bell hooks (1990) speaks powerfully:

> I am waiting for them to stop talking about the other...it is not just important what we speak about, but how and why [italics added] we speak. Often, this speech about the other erases the other: I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back in such a way that it has become mine. Re-writing you. (pp. 151-152)

In the context of education, do we give teachers' voices a fair chance to be heard and empowered to actually impact the changes that affect their schools? Or, do we simply, as researchers and/or policy makers collect those voices to illustrate theories about schooling and give a "practitioner" feel and make up to the general field of educational research and reform?

Teachers' Voice(s)

One premise that frames our discussion is a belief that teachers are involuntarily silent and voluntarily silenced when it comes to changing education (Bodone, 1997), i.e. an oppressed group. The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) described the oppressed as those who are not able or allowed to "say his or her own words, to name the world". Teachers fit this description. Their world is that of education, but their words do not name it or define it. Their role and expertise are often limited to the classroom with no real opportunities to expand beyond this setting.

Teachers' voices have not been absent from the literature. There have been many books written about teachers' stories and experiences (Ashton-Warner, 1963; Kozol, 1967) or collection of teachers' texts (Ayers, 1995; McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993). Teachers have much to say and will say it. What is often missing is a recognition of their stories, a validation that those

experiences and teachers' interpretations of those experiences can inform and influence policies that are made to change schools or teacher education programs. Robyn Russell, a teacher who collaborated with Gitlin (1994) on an alternative methodology to research teachers' experiences, had this comment:

> The struggle between silence and voice has been lifelong for me... Society told me to be seen and not heard, like some naughty child, while an inside whisper begged for a listening ear. It was within this state of fluctuation that I began a journey into further study of the educational system. This story is about my chosen project of developing teacher voice; but more than this, it is about my own travels in this previously uncharted terrain: *to speak and to be heard.* (p.189)

For teachers to develop their voices means that the content of their words is knowledge worth considering, a legitimate knowledge (Gitlin and Meyers, 1993) that has been acquired through years of professional experiences. Back in the early 1980s, when scientific and quantitative data held the answers of all questions, what teachers knew and could say about schools and their profession carried little weight, as confirmed by Darling-Hammond (1990):

> A decade ago, when my colleague Arthur Wise and I embarked on a study of teachers' views of educational policies, we were exploring largely uncharted territory. At that time, the idea of talking to teachers as a way of illuminating the effects of policy was viewed by many as irrelevant, at best, and methodically unsound, at worst (After all, teachers could hardly be presumed to be "objective"; neither were they viewed by many as an important part of the policy process). (p. 340)

This devaluation of teachers' stories has stigmatized many who, disillusioned and deprived of what they thought was their legitimate knowledge, don't wish to develop their voices beyond their classroom doors. Instead, "they have grown to anticipate the continuance of school structures and mandates, instigated without their input and often in the face of their objections" (Gitlin, 1994, p. 192). Or as Lortie (1975), in his book Schoolteacher portrays it:

> Schooling is long on prescription, short on description. Although books and articles instructing teachers on how they should behave are legion, empirical studies of teaching

work – and the outlook of those who staff the schools – remain rare. (as cited in Goodson, 1992, p. 3)

Qualitative research via its various methods — focus groups, interviews, observations — goes inside classrooms, talks to people who are there daily (teachers and students), hears them, observes occurrences and phenomena that makeup the realities of schools and brings people together to reflect upon those occurrences and phenomena. It grasps the nuances and the emotional dimension of human experiences (Bodone, 1997). In educational research qualitative methodology has helped to move from "taking teachers and students for granted and treating them as classroom furniture, to seeing them as thinking and possibly disputatious human beings" (Ravitch, as cited in Bacharach, 1990, p. 13).

Possibilities and Limitations

STEP focused primarily on the collection of teachers' thoughts and learnings about the implementation of standard-based reform in their classrooms and schools, and solicited their suggestions for improving teacher education programs. Teachers' contextualized and revealed experiences became a vehicle by which practice could inform theory (Bodone, 1997). Policy can then respond to the "real" problems faced by those who practice education everyday. This is easier said than done, because in reality educational theory and practice exist in different realities.

At the Ninth Education Trust National Conference (November 1998), policymakers and educational researchers met to discuss barriers encountered while linking research to policy in education and found that:

- policy aims at the "possible", whereas research aims at "perfection";
- scope: policy deals with large spaces, research with microcosms;
- policy is interested in what works, not why, which is the main question of qualitative research (Bodone, 1998, personal notes).

This argumentative session revealed a clear lack of communication and understanding between these two worlds which both look at the same reality, i.e. that of education. At times, it felt like the two parties spoke two different languages, two different English languages, revealing

even semantic differences in the terminology they used to describe issues (Bodone, 1998, personal notes).

Qualitative researchers, who value the "thinking" possibilities of teachers and enable their voices, are becoming hermeneuts —interpreters. They render the voices of the unheard in a language accessible both to teachers themselves and to a wider and presumably more powerful audience (LeCompte, 1993) i.e. policy makers and other researchers. Teachers' voices are moving to the forefront of educational research for there is a need in the social sciences, and particularly in education, for interpretive texts... [because] "it's time for theory building" (Catapano, 1991, p. 14).

What teachers know determines what they do, which in turn, determines what a student learns. And the learning outcomes determine what needs to be changed or improved. It is a circular, dialectical relationship between the teacher and student, and no one better than them (teacher or student) knows what goes on in that educational process. If expert knowledge is what policy makers and educational researchers are after, then it seems logical to elicit teachers' (and students') voices through their stories to get the "authentic" information that can best explain the mechanisms at work as well as the personal and emotional underpinnings. Carter (1993), a teacher educator, confirms this:

> For many of us, stories capture, more than scores or mathematical formulae ever can, the richness and indeterminacy of our experiences as teachers and the complexity of our understandings of what teaching is and how others can be prepared to engage in this profession. (p. 5)

The recommendations for change, through teachers' narratives, come from the trenches where transformation is processed from the ground up (Lieberman, 1995), a recognized criterion for successful reform. Lynde Paule, the evaluation coordinator for PASS, noted that to achieve coherence between educational theories and educational practices, the prescriptive words of teachers, as practitioners of the theories, are vital (informal conversation, May 1997). Teachers are more likely to listen to and implement prescribed practices if what they need to do is voiced by one or many of their own. The prescription is experiential and furthermore, originates from a shared professional environment and culture. Hong (1996) who examined one year of the effects of reform in one school via a qualitative design, explains the following:

> There is a huge emotional gap between an academic exposition of the difficulties of school reform and a tension-charged meeting of parents and teachers to discuss a proposal for multiage grouping. A polite seminar discussion does not begin to touch the bewildering pain a teacher may have when confronted with instructional changes that upend 20 years of practice. (p. xv)

It is a natural human phenomenon, to trust the words and actions of one who shares similar working conditions, frustrations, joys, apprehensions, and daily complexities. Scientists trust other scientists, doctors other doctors. They read each other's studies and share expertise in their journals. This does not mean that outside influences or recommendations cannot or should not filter into the world of teachers. To the contrary, we believe it is a valuable exchange, as long as it is an exchange, a dialogue. Local circumstances and contexts influence the global, larger political and research picture, and vice versa. As teachers' voices inform policy and research, in return research studies and policy materials could be regularly disseminated so that teachers are aware of what goes on outside their classrooms, in other schools, in other states, and around the world.

METHODOLOGY

The STEP research has relied on qualitative methods while drawing on principles of action research and educative research to elicit teachers' voices and document the experiences of these co-development team participants in the process of implementing standards-based practices. We utilized several data collection methods such as journal entries, individual interviews, focus groups, team meeting proceedings, email questions and documents review to identify the knowledge, skills, approaches and strategies used by teachers in the process of transitioning from a traditional teacher centered classroom to a learning environment which is designed around and focused on student learning.

Research "With" not "On"

Action research is about dialogue, about teachers and educators working and thinking together to change their practice for the better. Here, contrary to a more empirical tradition, theory does not determine practice. Teachers are not required to fit their practice into the theoretical molds of some outside educational researchers mandated by even outsider policymakers (Bodone, 1997). To the contrary, teachers are encouraged to make their own decisions on what is most appropriate for their practice and educational philosophy: research is done WITH them, not ON them (McNiff, 1988).

Teachers who participate in an action research project become aware of their teaching skills, philosophy, and of the daily experiences that they share with students, parents, and colleagues. They reflect upon these, critique them, and act upon them, opening themselves up for changes, for innovations, with the goal of an improved practice. McNiff (1988) describes the process in these words:

> The method itself of action research is elegant. It involves a self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and re-planning. It requires teachers to be acutely aware of a sense of process, and to refine their perceptions to account for that process. Far from being ad hoc, action research raises to a conscious level much of what is already being done by good teachers on an intuitive level. It enables teachers to identify and come to grips with their practice in a humane way, which is at once supportive and critical. As a headmaster said of his staff: 'It liberates teachers from their prejudices and allows their instincts to blossom.' (p. 7)

Teacher Learning via Educative Research

Teachers base their "legitimate" knowledge on experience (Gitlin et al., 1992) having had little opportunity to engage in other forms of inquiry, in part for lack of time and resources. While theoretically-based knowledge has been given recognition and legitimacy, teachers and their experiential expertise are often placed last at the bottom of the hierarchical order of what counts and what does not in educational policy and research. Gitlin et al. believe that one way to

encourage the validation of more than one legitimate knowledge lies in how we research, in the kinds of methods we use to collect and validate people's knowledge. They propose educative research

> that values both experiential knowledge and knowledge produced through systematic inquiry and therefore attempts to broaden notions of expertise.... And what difference if any would this sort of method make? For example, would teachers' voices be heard, and, if so, would these voices encourage school change and challenge the narrow and oppressive features of our school system? (p. 2)

Educative research aims at developing teachers' voices with their active participation in this process of documenting their insights. Teachers become responsible for the very research that is being done on their practice, giving them ownership of what to ask and how to ask for it as well as to make them accountable for the understanding of and transformation of their own practice. Gitlin et al. (1992) explain that the term educative refers to a process that brings individuals together in such a fashion that participants are involved in determining research questions and expected to benefit from the overall "educative" experience (p. 7). There is the dialectical relationship between their thinking and acting on their outside and inside circumstances: teachers are able to question the outside meaning makers of their professions, such as educational research and theories, policy makers, and the various control systems put in place to monitor their actions. Meanwhile, they are also looking inwards, inside their own thinking and practice, to generate the needed knowledge and critical reflection that will allow for the transformation of their daily experiences and empower them as creators and masters of their art, teaching.

In both educative and action research, teachers voices are allowed and able to develop, to move beyond the mere act of speaking into (critical) reflection and action, into *praxis* (Freire, 1970). They are not generic and do not become "the" voice of teachers; each of them, consonant or dissonant, is part of this legitimate knowledge that the group has generated while working and thinking together. When teachers are viewed as researchers, they regain their status of "experts" whose knowledge can be seen as a legitimate source of data for informing policies and practices that impact their work (Bodone, 1997).

Participants Organized into Co-development Teams

The data were collected over a two-year period, from the fall of 1996 to the summer of 1998. There were 44 secondary teachers and higher education faculty participating in this reflective study of professional practice. These voluntary participants were from a purposeful sample (Patton, 1990) representing 17 high schools and five higher education institutions. These schools were geographically representative of many areas in the state of Oregon. The project teachers were selected and invited to participate as they were already members of the larger PASS project and therefore experienced with standards-based reform.

The teachers and faculty were organized into co-development teams of three to eight members representing six disciplines including: English, mathematics, science, social science, second languages, visual and performing arts. Each co-development team was comprised of beginning (2-5 years) and veteran (up to 30 years) teachers, working in rural and urban settings, and serving diverse student populations and communities. The teacher and faculty participant groups reflected diverse ethnic backgrounds, personal characteristics, and professional experiences. This enabled us to access a multitude of descriptive "teachers' voices" rather than a more singular, prescriptive "teacher's voice" (Hargreaves,1996).

These high school and higher education co-development teams were a unique feature of STEP, bringing together into collaborative work groups two sectors of education that rarely interface. The teams provided opportunities for focused conversations on standards-based teaching and learning, the sharing of instruction and assessment materials and both the informal and formal evaluation of student work. Participants were treated as teams of experts, each of whom was engaged in the implementation of a standards-based K-16 system and contributed to the wisdom gleaned from practice as a teacher – beginning, veteran, high school, and higher education.

The Focus for Inquiry:
What knowledge and skills are needed for teaching in a standards-based system?

The participants' reflective study began within the context of an action research cycle focused on the knowledge and skills necessary to teach in a standards-based system. Initially, the inquiry ranged broadly around the question of *what knowledge and skills are needed for teaching*

in a standards-based system? The members of each co-development team were free to select any one of a number of PASS proficiency standards in their content areas (math, English, science, social science, visual and performing arts and second languages) as a focus for instruction and assessment. Each participant captured their experiences in a journal using hand-written or electronic recording and collected classroom artifacts (assignments, assessments, student work) to illustrate standards-based practices. Meeting four to five times a year as co-development teams and once as an entire STEP project group, participants' learnings emerged in these general thematic areas: Teacher knowledge and skills, instructional strategies, student learning and shifts in thinking. At the end of the first year, focus groups conducted with each co-development team examined specific practices such as how teachers determine course content, select instructional strategies and evaluate student progress. General reflections included what impact standards have on teaching behavior and students' learning.

During the second year, participants elected to adopt a common framework for their inquiry that was organized around a general set of teacher practices in a standards-based system. These practices included: Targeting specific standards for teaching and learning, planning instruction and assessment around that target, teaching with a variety of strategies to ensure student progress toward that standard, assessing student learning across time with multiple measures, verifying their judgements of student proficiency with other team members through the cross-scoring of student work and reflecting upon their experiences. Using co-development team questions (Table 1) derived from the first year's data, participants were more focused, and as a result delved further into their own pedagogical practices, specifically describing that which seemed to enhance student learning. Each co-development team also selected a specific PASS proficiency standard as a common focus for the team's inquiry and members committed to full implementation of the common framework of teacher practices and these standards in one or more classes. The intent was that each team would be speaking from a similar frame of reference about the actual experience of standards-based teaching.

Table 1: STEP Co-Development Team Questions for Year 2

Target	• What do you think (the standard) expects students to know and be able to do? • What types of information will you use to determine what students need to know and be able to do?
Plan	• How will you plan to assess students' knowledge and skills? • How will you plan to teach (the standard)? • How will you help students make meaning of (the standard)? • What are the knowledge and skills students will need to study the standard? • How will you assess students' prior knowledge and skills related to the standard? • What specific content knowledge and skills will you need to teach to and assess (the standard)?
Teach	• What instructional methods/strategies/resources will you use to teach (the standard) in your classroom? • How will you connect (the standard) to what students know and where they need to be to meet the standard? • How will you approach the varying levels of knowledge and skills among your students?
Assess	• How will you know if a student is "proficient" or not? • What evidence will you use to determine this?
Verify	• How does your judgment of student proficiency compare with other teachers' judgments of that student's work? • How will you know that you share a common understanding of student proficiency in (the standard)? • How will you work with colleagues to develop a common understanding of (the standard), review and cross-score student work, and verify judgments about student proficiency?
Reflect	• How do you use evidence of student performance to improve your professional practice? • How will you modify, refine or renew practices in designing curriculum, instruction and assessment? • How will you further your own content knowledge and pedagogy? • What role will colleagues play in furthering your professional development?

The proficiency standard(s) selected by each co-development team addressed: (a) writing and literary analysis (English), (b) problem-solving in a sub-discipline such as algebra (mathematics), (c) scientific inquiry in a sub-discipline such as biology (science), (d) performance within a social/historical context in the arts such as music (visual and performing arts), (e) social science analysis in a sub-discipline such as history (social science) and (f) oral proficiency and written expression (second languages). In addition to sharing teacher materials and student work at team meetings, participants also assembled collections of student work

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throughout the year for scoring at the statewide PASS Verification Institute at the end of both years.

Data Collection

Multiple methods of data collection were used to capture the learning generated by each co-development team's experiences as standards implementation revolved around an action research cycle. The sources of data collected include the following items:

1) Journal entries - these included general reflections on standards-based teaching within the context of class(es) where teachers agreed to focus instruction on a specific standard, assess student performance toward that standard, and generate student work that would then be shared with other teachers in the group along with classroom tasks, scoring guides and other materials. Journals were shared during four of the group meetings that occurred between September and June of the first year.

2) Focus group responses - conducted in each of the six discipline groups in June of the first year, questions specifically focused on recommendations for teacher education programs based on participants' reflections of the previous year over their teaching in a standards-based classroom.

3) Responses to co-development team questions - derived from the journal process of the first year, these 20 questions in six categories (target, plan teach, assess, verify, reflect) focused conversations around a cycle of classroom activities. This cycle led to a "Verification Institute" where all participating teachers met in their content area groups with student work and verified or confirmed one another's judgements on student's proficiency (or lack thereof). Specific questions were assigned via email, summarized for subsequent group meetings, then served as a point of departure for further discussion. Group meetings occurred every other month from September through June of the second year.

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4) Co-development team proceedings – individual co-development team meetings occurred regularly and consisted of four to five meetings per year at various locations. The meetings convened for two to five hour sessions and all proceedings were audio taped and eventually transcribed. During year one, participants and facilitators had open-ended meeting discussions addressing all the aspects of their standards-based implementation experience. Colleagues brought teacher and student materials (i.e. scoring guides, tasks, curriculum plans, student-parent communication, etc.) to share, peer critique and co-develop. The second year the proceedings were guided by a more structured agenda including the revisiting of email question responses, focus questions for discussion, materials sharing, and discussion encompassing their questions and issues as they work with standards.

5) Teacher materials - during the first and second years, participants in each group shared classroom tasks, activities, scoring guides, and samples of student work. From the discussion of these materials, they derived strategies and techniques for improving their practice in a standards-based classroom.

6) Teacher surveys - the STEP high school teachers were a subset of the approximately 100 PASS teachers from 18 Oregon high schools who completed surveys in the spring of 1997, and again in 1998. The instrument examined teacher knowledge and levels of use of standards. The analysis of responses also included possible differences between STEP/non-STEP teachers as a group and by content area. Higher education faculty participating in STEP did not complete the surveys.

7) Student surveys - these surveys were administered in the same PASS sites and at the same time as were the teacher surveys, and analyzed in a similar fashion.

Two research assistants working with the project director systematically collected data, using the various methods outlined above for all six of the co-development teams in each content area (math, English, science, social science, visual and performing arts and second languages). The two assistants also coordinated and facilitated the co-development team meetings, each supporting three groups. All meetings and face-to-face interviews were audio taped and

transcribed. The hand-written journal entries were also transcribed and the email responses from participants were prepared for coding.

Studying multiple participants and institutional settings and employing multiple methods of data collection over time, allowed for triangulation of the data, and in doing so greatly strengthened the study's usefulness for other settings (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The importance of multiple sources of evidence in order to provide and maintain a reliable chain of evidence about the topic in question was highlighted by Yin (1994). He suggests that these multiple sources essentially provide "multiple measures of the same phenomena" (p. 92).

The major purpose of the open-ended focus group and individual interviews was to "learn to see the world from the eyes of the person being interviewed" (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner and Steinmetz, 1991). Seidman (1991) wrote: "Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior . . . [It] allows us to put behavior in context and provide access to understanding their action" (p. 4). The focus group interviews and meeting proceedings encouraged discussion and expression of various points of view, therefore providing participants with an opportunity to hear opinions and understandings and then form their own (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The teacher materials shared during team meetings corroborated information collected through journals, meetings, focus group interviews and individual interviews, and email question responses (Yin, 1994).

Data Analysis

The project director and the two research assistants systematically and collaboratively analyzed the data which were collected from all the various sources across the six co-development teams. Previously, all the raw data were formatted and prepared for entry into a database which was organized for the analysis software, Qualitative Solutions and Research Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing (QSR Nud*ist). This software package aided us with our analysis by supporting the processes of coding data in an index system, searching text, and searching patterns for coding and theorizing about the data (Gahan and Hannibal, 1998).

Next, a system of content analysis that involved identifying, coding, and categorizing the main themes in the data was adopted. The QSR Nud*ist program helped manage the raw and coded data so that a preliminary categorizing of participant responses was accomplished. The program enabled us to code the data based on these categories and after coding it, to examine these categories for patterns across the six content teams and within the individual groups. As we analyzed the data from year one, we looked for "reoccurring regularities in the data" (Patton, 1990) which produced patterns that could then be sorted into categories. We then coded participants' response patterns across the six content areas into a total of 24 emergent categories framed with the following titles: student learning, teacher behaviors, instructional strategies, and shifts in thinking. We then worked back and forth between the data and the classification schema to verify the meaningfulness and accuracy of the categories and data placement (Patton, 1990).

We identified emergent categories from the year one coding to frame our five new categories. Following the collection of year two data, we proceeded to code and analyze the data by applying the same strategies as previously employed. We coded data into the categories of target, plan, teach, assess, verify and reflect. The last step in the analysis for this paper was to focus on the verification category in order to identify major themes. Participants' quotes were carefully selected to illustrate each of the three major themed findings described in the next section.

FINDINGS

The 60 co-development team meeting transcriptions, six focus group interviews, individual interviews, three statewide all-participant retreats, journal entries, 250 electronic responses to focus questions and various teacher materials comprised a substantial body of data. For the purposes of this paper, the findings reported are those that were coded during analysis into the verification category of the framework (described by six categories) for standards-based teaching that served as the focus of year two activities.

Teachers' voices on verification are of particular interest given the central role teacher judgement plays in the Oregon assessment system for both K-12 and college admission. As discussed previously, the Oregon University System through PASS bases judgement of student readiness for college entry level on assessment information generated through a combination of

performance assessment (collections of student work in specific proficiency areas) and multiple choice tests (national and state). High school teachers are responsible for teaching to the standards and working with students to generate collections that indicate sufficiency (the range of work addresses the criteria for meeting the standard) and proficiency (the performance on that work is at the level necessary for college entry coursework). Teachers who are participating in the development of PASS may verify their judgements of collections of student work with other teachers in their schools and with other teachers from around the state at PASS Verification Institutes or, in the case of STEP teachers, with co-development team members. For the purpose of college admissions, teacher judgements of student proficiency will be recorded on a supplemental transcript report in each of the six content areas on a 1-5 scale with 3 indicating "meeting proficiency." Judgements of 4 or 5 must be verified by other PASS teachers and higher education faculty.

Within STEP, the verification of teacher judgement of student proficiency was both a formative and summative process. During co-development team meetings, participants focused their conversations on the PASS standards in their content area. They described how they were designing teaching and learning activities around the target standard and how they were working with students to generate a variety of "evidence" that when collected together, provided a clear picture of proficient performance. As trust was developed among team members, teachers shared classroom tasks, scoring guides and samples of student working requesting specific feedback on their classroom materials, planned activities, strategies and approaches and whether or not it appeared that students were approaching proficiency. The PASS Verification Institutes, held in May of each year, provided a summative experience where STEP teachers' collections of student work, along with those of over 125 other teachers, were judged on the merits of sufficiency of evidence and proficiency of performance.

As PASS is phased in over the next six years to full implementation, the consistency of judgement in what will be a high stakes assessment system is of central concern. Moving beyond the notion of simple consistency of judgement, Gipps (1994) calls for "comparability, that is, equivalence in the application of standards across assessment tasks, assessment occasions, students, classes, schools and school years" (p. 28). Furthermore, this degree of consistency requires "shared experience and understandings within a community of judgement," (Wolf,

1995, p. 71). In other words, this common understanding must be embedded in the minds and professional practice of teachers.

Three major themes emerged from the study data, describing in some detail the various frameworks and supports that must be present for teachers to achieve common understanding and reach comparable judgement of student proficiency:

- a clearly articulated framework of standards and assessments supports teachers' common understanding of student learning and comparable judgement of student proficiency;
- training and professional development opportunities that are collegial in nature enhance teachers' content knowledge, pedagogy, and capacity to reach common understanding; and
- leadership is the critical factor in embedding standards-based teacher practices into the organizational structure of schools.

These themes are discussed in greater detail below.

1). A Clearly Articulated Framework of Standards and Assessments Supports Teachers' Common Understanding of Student Learning and Comparable Judgement of Student Proficiency

1.1. Criteria that are linked to standards provide a means for teachers to reach common understanding of student progress toward the standards.

We found that across the content areas of English, math, science, social science, visual and performing arts and second languages, teachers generally spoke to the need for having an accompanying set of criteria that guides teachers' judgement toward an understanding of whether or not the student has demonstrated proficiency. These criteria promote a common vision of student performance and ensure that teacher judgements are based on this common vision rather than on idiosyncratic preferences. The challenge for teachers is that these criteria do not always exist. In English, science and math where PASS criteria are currently developed in the greatest detail, high school (HS) teachers and higher education (HE) faculty attest to the link between specific guidelines and consistent judgement with these comments:

> If we can come to common ground first before even looking at a student work, and if the scoring guide is clear enough to be used in justifying one's assessment, then it is possible to come to an agreement. This process will need to be maintained. We tend to adapt our

expectations to what we see; therefore, when teachers assess their own work without any opportunity for 'refocusing', then they may be straying from what is generally agreed upon as proficient performance. When the classroom teacher and an outside evaluator (from another school) can agree, then the student is clearly proficient. (English, HS Teacher)

When I score essays, I have to admit that I look for what the essay does well. Several of the other readers look for an accumulation of problems, and after a certain (unspecified) number, score the essay as 'not proficient'. I have done 'mini-reads' with one or two faculty this year, as well, and we often agree on scores. This comes from discussing in a more focused way the criteria for scoring and the expectations we have for good or exemplary performance. There are certain faculty, though, who do not agree with me on standards and criteria for grading. They seem to want to give credit for 'effort' which drives me crazy. (English, HE Professor)

When I attend a verification institute, I am amazed how much correlation of judgment there is between my judgments and other teachers. I know that there is a common understanding of the standards and that teachers understand the need to be consistently critical of student work in regards to standards. (Science, HS Teacher)

I don't really talk about student proficiency to other faculty. But in PASS Verification Institutes, we mostly do agree as we are given specific guidelines on what is proficiency. (Mathematics, HE Professor)

In the area of Second Languages, PASS criteria are designed around oral and written communication linked to a national framework of proficiency standards rather than designed around proficiency in literature translation. Our STEP teachers share this orientation toward proficiency in communication. Over a two-year period, the process of assessing student performance against specific criteria served to establish a larger vision of student performance and how that might be linked to classroom instruction and assessment. A second language teacher and a faculty member respond with the following thoughts:

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> I cannot say for certain that my judgment of student work will match other people's judgments all of the time, but I found it reassuring that when we had enough evidence to make a judgment, that we could almost always agree whether the student was proficient or not. To what degree the student was or not (exemplary) seemed to be a mute point in most respects, as long as we agree on the main issue of proficiency. For now, I'm pleased if another professional in my field and I can agree that a certain student has crossed the threshold into proficiency. (Second Language, HS Teacher)

> When we gather across the languages, those of us who work with the same standards and assessment tools, the comparison becomes much less problematic. We can work in considerable detail to describe a possible new curriculum, and we can share teaching techniques and activities accurately up and down the proficiency scale, because we have common measurements and goals. (Second Language, HE Professor)

In social science and the arts, PASS criteria are less clearly defined. These content areas are essentially collections of unique sub-disciplines (e.g. history, economics or drama and choral music) united in the PASS framework only by a common process for demonstration of student proficiency (e.g. social science analysis and performance of the arts). This causes teachers to rely to a greater degree solely on their own experience or knowledge of their sub-discipline to make judgements about student proficiency. This notion is reflected below:

> I thought on the social studies at the PASS Verification Institute that the scoring guide was not specific enough to really make a judgment. So, you just take this general feeling that you have from the paper... And we all kind of said, Yeah! This kid can make it to college or not, this kid is quite not there! But in terms of saying why, it's hard! (Social Science, HS Teacher)

> It is difficult to come to an agreement if the group assessing operates from a different level of expectation or standard of excellence. (Arts, HS Teacher)

> When I work with people other than choral directors to assess student work which uses choral/vocal music as the medium, the range of assessments begins to broaden. Likewise, when I attempt to assess student works which use other arts strands, my assessments

deviate further from the norm as established by the instructors who specialize in that medium. The fact that there are common elements which are basic to the arts does not diminish the fact that there are tremendous issues of technique for the use of those common elements which are specific to each art form and often take a lifetime of study to acquire. (Arts, HS Teacher)

Teachers may look at the same piece and have difficulty judging that with the same eyes even though we have the same language in front of us. Even if "balance", the term "balance" is understood to another teacher and it's understood by me, when we look at the same performance, we have the same criteria in front of us, we are still going to judge that differently. (Arts, HS Teacher)

1.2. <u>Scoring guides and exemplars of proficient performance</u> provide tools for judging student work and building common understanding.

Across all six content areas, we found STEP teachers embraced the use of various types of scoring guides that called for various approaches for arriving at a judgement. A formal state-sanctioned instrument, like the ODE writing scoring guide, requires judgement on each of six analytical traits. Less formal guides include the PASS proficiency standard scoring guides that provide detailed criteria at the "meeting proficiency" level (see Appendix). PASS calls for a holistic judgement on whether or not these criteria are represented in the student work directly, or that sufficient evidence is presented for the rater to infer that the student would be proficient in all criteria. Informal teacher-created scoring guides were also shared over the two-year period, by members of the six co-development teams. Regardless of the type of scoring guide or judgement called for, STEP teachers acknowledged the value of these tools for enhancing common understanding and tempering individual variation in judgement (or particular biases) towards one's own students as evidenced in these remarks:

I will know that I share a common understanding when we can look at work and 'score' it or grade it within one grade or number, using exactly the same scoring mechanism and making sure we understand the mechanism the same way. There is a universe of interpretation that comes into the grading or evaluating activity, though, and one of the

most important steps for me is to make sure everyone involved understands the scoring guide the same way. When I am confident that we all understand the scoring guide the same way, then the activity can proceed without too much arguing about the features we're looking for. (English, HE Professor)

Scoring guides have allowed me to understand and implement a consistent evaluation process which in turn has given me a common understanding of student proficiency. (Social Science, HS Teacher)

I most often agree with colleagues who have knowledge of the scoring guides. In other than PASS work, I'm considered a hard grader but offer many more than one chance for students to demonstrate their knowledge. (Mathematics, HS Teacher)

I haven't scored any of my own proficiency work without being worried that I'm being too hard on the kids or too easy. As their teacher, I want them to do well, and I worry that the score I give them (when it's not cross-scored) is an inflated score. It is always on the back of my mind that if the work were to be cross-scored, the student would receive a different score altogether.... How can you be assured that you're scoring accurately? (Second Language, HS Teacher)

Along with scoring guides, exemplars of student performance complete the "picture" of student proficiency, as confirmed by an English faculty participant:

I think any "common understanding" of standard will have to be re-negotiated with every reading and assessment experience. The value of "range finders," or sample papers that resemble features found in the whole collection of samples is high in this kind of system. If we have the standard and continually refer to it, that is good. What tends to happen, however, is that we "drift" even within a single-sitting assessment experience. Heaven knows what happens over time and with many different age levels and types of work to assess. Thus, experiences where we get together to evaluate and discuss the same work, to agree on the salient features, and then to read and assess will be vital.

Use of scoring guides and exemplars were frequently related in teachers' comments about the purpose of the judgement being made. For PASS, teachers are asked to judge the readiness of the student to do entry level college coursework. This level of readiness, in general, was particularly difficult to define in the arts where there is no consensus within or across the sub-disciplines as indicated by these arts high school teachers:

> Where should the bar be placed for every student who is applying for admission to university? If this determination is made within each art form, will there be an attempt to make the height of the bar comparable across the arts?

> What will be the absolute minimum that every student should know about the arts to survive and make a meaningful contribution to society in general?

> It has really bothered me and it really is a challenge to me to try to figure out, what do I believe would be appropriate for students who are not going as music majors?

Lacking clear exemplars and defined performance levels, high school Arts teachers explained how they addressed this challenge when immersed in the verification process by shifting the focus to their vision of the archetypal entering student to reach common understanding of proficient performance:

> What happened at our table was that they felt several students that I had judged as 'not yet proficient' actually met proficiency as far as they were concerned and that my classroom standard was too high for PASS. My colleagues had to remind me that I should be setting proficiency levels for the generic student and not the third or fourth year theatre student whose collections I was submitting.

> I think we were much more realistic about our expectations this year. We used "Joe Football" as the guide to help us remember that although we are attempting to raise the bar, there are many students who are quite average (or even untalented) in the arts. We cannot expect every college bound student to hold the lead in a play and design costumes and know theatre history, all at a mastery level! This is a change in thinking from last year!

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In the second languages, two distinct schools of thought offer opposing views on proficiency and the means by which to assess it. One university faculty member of a co-development team shared the challenge of using common tools for judgement within these differing constructs:

> Often it is impossible to compare, since they are using radically different concepts of language proficiency - at least when they are wearing their in-class "Grammar hats". When language teachers take off those hats and judge as normal human beings ("Can this person speak the language?"), we can often reach good agreement.

While scoring guides and exemplars of student proficiency provided the tools for reaching common judgement, they are still the means to an end – the verification process. A second language teacher states his secondary school view:

> The first time I have participated in an actual cross-scoring of student work was at the PASS Verification Institute. This was perhaps the most exciting workshop I have attended to date. To me, it was significant and FINALLY we were sitting down with scoring guides in hand, however crude the scoring guides may be, and holding student work up to a common standard. I found this to be excellent and stimulating. I would have liked to spend an entire week doing this work.

2). Training and Professional Development Opportunities that are Collegial in Nature Enhance Teachers' Content Knowledge, Pedagogy and Capacity to Reach Common Understanding

2.1. <u>Collegial activities</u> provide the avenue for purposive professional development.

As professional working relationships were developed across STEP co-development teams, a genuine appreciation for collegial activity emerged as well as a recognition that this type of activity rarely occurs in schools as they are currently structured. As one high school social science teacher lauded the end of "splendid isolation" in his department, other teachers who are isolated by virtue of their discipline, e.g. the sole drama teacher, welcomed the opportunity to join a larger statewide collegial group. These collegial activities are purposive, providing a

vehicle for enhancing teacher judgement, expanding frameworks for assessment and deepening common understanding of proficiency that will ultimately impact classroom practice. Several disciplines discussed their collegial work on standards as illustrated by these statements:

> Talking with peers is the way I think all of us will know when we are making appropriate judgements. This is new to many schools since I usually go for a whole day without seeing another teacher. This "talking with peers" thing is a revolutionary concept especially since there is only one of me in this district and very few others understand that theatre is more than fancy costumes and cool sets. We need to make the dialogue with the other Arts teachers meaningful; we need to speak a common language. (Arts, HS Teacher)

> I will know we share a common understanding when we all sit down with the same set of goals (that is, a genuine proficiency orientation), and proceed to hammer out the curricular system for our program, constantly proposing and judging with reference to language proficiency. (Second Language, HE Professor)

> With every proficiency except E, it would seem that our ability to know a common standard can only come through collegial work. Arts assessment is still in its infancy and although there are some terrific models out there, I think we need to hammer it out among ourselves as most of the present models are a response to national standards, and PASS proficiencies go beyond product outcomes into process skills. (Arts, HS Teacher)

The experience with the STEP co-development team caused several individuals to envision how they might tackle the challenge of introducing collegial learning in the context of their own school or campus. It is interesting to note that there is always a 'standards focus' to this collegial activity, to the verification process, to reviewing student work and to improving comparability of judgement as the following participants stated:

> I will try to work with colleagues in my discipline to work up a common scoring guide so that students throughout the school know that teachers are consistent. I will work with teachers in different disciplines to reinforce the concept of standards and to reinforce the use of scoring guides, and the relevance and connectedness of various disciplines. I will

ask to score work from other resources in the discipline, and have other teachers score my student work to help verify judgments about student proficiency. (Social Science, HS Teacher)

Faculty, too, even when they feel insecure about "judging" student writing or speaking, can gain confidence when they share their insights in a group. Respecting each other's ideas about student performance is one of the best ways to get faculty to share their students' work. One of the most important ways to get faculty to verify their judgments is by making them feel secure enough to share their students' work." Another way would be for faculty to sit in on each other's student conferences and listen to what features of writing or speaking or critical thinking get emphasized in these meetings. This might be a good "mentor" model for establishing consistency. (English, HE Professor)

I hope that within the next year, I will be able to work on helping teachers to feel more comfortable. I see there is a need for that within buildings, districts and statewide so that all students are being presented to higher education institutions from the same fundamental background without inflated grades or meeting of the standard. (Science, HS Teacher)

Student work can be introduced to my teachers. There needs to be a common decision to target a particular standard and everyone would bring student work to be scored. No one would know whose work belonged to whom, but we would score all of it together to see if there is consistency between teachers. (Science, HS Teacher)

2.2. <u>Teachers' knowledge</u> provides the foundation for comparable judgement.

Across all content areas, the development of teachers' content knowledge was frequently cited as a vital factor in reaching comparable judgements, as this high school arts participant explains:

I have found judgments are comparable especially when the breadth and depth of the knowledge base is similar with those in collaboration. The quality of assessment and

effectiveness of scoring depends largely on the knowledge of the group comparing the student's work.

In addition to content knowledge as we traditionally understand it, STEP teachers referred to a broader expertise marked by a deep understanding of teaching and learning in one's discipline, defined by Schulman (1987) as "pedagogical content knowledge". This notion was seen as a necessary attribute of teacher professionalism that contributed to comparable judgements. STEP teachers noted an interesting aberration in scoring. Teachers who lacked knowledge tended to rate student proficiency at a higher level. A few examples of this observation are included in the following statements:

> If I am with teachers who know mathematics, then we are pretty consistent. If I am with a group of teachers who have not kept up with mathematical education over the last 10 to 20 years then they tend to have higher scores on papers. (Mathematics, HE Professor)

> I know that when my student teacher began scoring writing samples, he gave everyone 5 and 6 when I was giving them 2 and 3. It took him a lot of practice and discussion. He admitted that it 'sounded good' or 'that the student really meant something else'. This is where the standards are so important: Could the student perform at a specified level? Did we set a predetermined level of achievement before scoring? Did the student have prior knowledge of how they would be assessed so that they could have opportunity to reach the minimum level of achievement? (Second Language, HS Teacher)

> Overall, validity is an important issue but a paradoxical one. The paradox lies in the observation that surely the most vulnerable aspect of proficiency-based assessment is validity, while in practice it is not a problem at all. I should qualify that. It is not a problem among higher education faculty and some of the better high school teachers, and even then it is only not a problem in an abstract context. What I worry about is that many teachers do not have the understanding (as opposed to knowledge) of content needed to have assimilated professional norms, and when faced with real students in a real life situation, they will allow their judgment to be clouded by a myriad of external factors,

just as it happens with grades in the current system. We MUST build in external validation and quality assurance to make this work! (Mathematics, HE Professor)

3). Leadership is the Critical Factor in Embedding Standards-based Teacher Practices into the Organizational Structure of Schools

3.1. Leadership controls the time and the opportunity for collegial learning.

A recurring theme throughout the STEP project was that the lack of building level administrative support or knowledge of standards actually inhibited standards based activities of teachers. Our findings show a general recognition that the traditional structure of schools does not allow for the many collegial activities that were deemed necessary by STEP teachers in order to reach comparable judgements. These activities included collegial reviews of student work, classroom tasks and scoring guides as well as opportunities for conversations around teaching and learning in a standards-based classroom. Clearly, the structure of the school day and allocation of resources were two areas viewed as being out of the control of the classroom teacher and in the hands of administrators. The following responses give a general idea of these perceptions:

> The only way I will be able to work with colleagues (in a worthwhile and productive manner) is if I have the support of my department and administrative faculty. Having the entire staff in agreement working with PASS would be the icing on the cake. The entire school needs to be involved and hours provided (not beyond the working day) to collaborate and develop this common understanding, to review and cross-score and verify judgments. (Arts, HS Teacher)

> The standards provide for us the words, and our school administrators just need to give us the opportunity to have the conversation. I think this is the most successful way of making sure we are on the same page with regard to student verification. (Arts, HS Teacher)

> Even at the university, a lot will depend on the administration providing an opportunity for faculty conversations. I will try to create the structure to ensure successful

conversations in the Math department at _____, through the department assessment team and in university studies. (Mathematics, HE Professor)

If possible, we need to have regular time scheduled for teachers to meet and discuss student work, score and cross-score, and collaborate about judgments of student work. One half day per month would be enough for teachers to use in preparation for using the standards and in student scoring. The only way for inexperienced teachers to begin to understand the standards is to use them in scoring student work. (Mathematics, HS Teacher)

In our school, we have done some of this in writing proficiencies. Time has been set aside to do this. There is simply not enough time to cross grade many papers given the time constraints which are presently upon us. The fact is that standards based teaching in social studies requires much more time to begin with, and there already is precious little time to get all the work done. (Social Science, HS Teacher)

There's not a tradition of sharing and we are all feeling very much time deprived, and so we just, you don't have this time to long term strategic planning, you just figure out, what's my next unit going to be. (Social Science, HS Teacher)

3.2. Leadership must <u>focus</u> the content and process of <u>professional development throughout the school year</u> on teaching to standards and reaching comparable judgements on student work.

STEP teachers tended to request professional development experiences that mirrored their experiences within the project. They clearly indicated that responsibility for allocation of resources to this effort falls to school and district administrators. Teachers also speculated that school administrators would benefit from participation in professional development activities with their staff. Many STEP participants indicated that their co-development team and project experiences were the most significant and meaningful professional development they had encountered in their teaching careers. The voices below represent several viewpoints regarding professional development:

First of all, all teachers must have solid content and process training. They must be excellent readers, writers, and thinkers themselves. Not only do they have to model it; they have to know it well enough to be able to articulate its various facets. This absolutely must be supported, and, in fact, forced, upon us as a staff by our administrators, at both a building and at a district level. It must be part of our in-services. (English, HS Teacher)

Teachers must have time at the beginning of the year to target a proficiency and decide how it will be done throughout the year. Teachers must have time as the year progresses to start looking together at student work, to see (a) how the students are doing and (b) how to verify judgments made by each individual teacher. Unless we have this kind of building and district-level support, it is going to be impossible to do the work we need to do to verify proficiency. It will be up to each teacher and they will bow to grade pressure the way they always have. If we do have time for in-services, we will need administrators who are just as interested as the teachers are to lead and facilitate the process. Everyone in the building needs to look at student work. Everyone needs to converse about it with others in the field. Administrators must become involved in order for the process to work, and all teachers must become involved also. We need to pull in people from the periphery so they can see what goes on. We have proven in verification and calibration sessions that people from all different fields can judge work proficient equally well, as long as they can have conversations about it. (English, HS Teacher)

Our department has put in a request for time this summer, as well as hoping to work together as an action team (during our delayed starts) next year to tackle these issues. The key to all this seems to be time, energy, and motivation! (Science, HS Teacher)

CONCLUSION

The voices of STEP teachers engaged in the actual implementation of standards provide clear imperatives for those charged with the formulation of educational policy and the design of teacher preparation programs and professional development to support that implementation. We believe the overarching imperative is that teachers are the primary agents of school reform;

therefore, they should be included as co-developers in all stages of design, implementation and continuous improvement of the standards-based system. Other educational researchers also support this finding (Darling-Hammond, 1990, 1996; Hong, 1996; Shedd and Bacharach, 1991) and policy makers who are attempting to implement successful reforms in schools nationally and internationally. The International Commission on Education for the 21st Century (1996), in its report to UNESCO, noted the following:

> No reform can succeed without the co-operation and active participation of teachers. Attempts to imposed educational reforms from the top down, or from outside, have obviously failed. The countries where the process has been relatively successful are those that obtained a determined commitment from local communities, parents, and teachers, backed up by continuing dialogue and various forms of outside financial, technical, or professional assistance. (p. 29)

As STEP teachers had the opportunity to truly immerse themselves in the co-development and implementation of standards-based reform, they reminded us that the price of exclusion is costly. Their professional expertise and that of other PASS teachers have contributed to the continuous improvement of PASS framework of standards, assessments, criteria, scoring guides and professional development activities. Their voices can be read in many of our publications as successive iterations of standards, scoring guides and assessment guidelines. We have welcomed the prior experiences, knowledge, and personal philosophies that they have brought to the co-development effort. We have encouraged them to share what they deemed relevant to inform our discussions and development.

The major findings of this study have also informed the next steps in the development of standards-based reform in Oregon. As teachers have strongly urged, the framework of standards and assessments for admissions to higher education (PASS) have been refined and aligned with the standards for the K-12 Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery (CIM and CAM). More challenging than standards' alignment is the task of aligning assessments including criteria and differing scoring guides. As STEP teachers indicated the alignment of these tools for assessment is critical in order for teachers to reach comparable judgements. To that end, current PASS development efforts systematically solicit teachers' input on how CIM work samples might contribute to PASS collections. Teachers are also providing the raw material, including

classroom tasks and comments on proficiency and sufficiency criteria for assessment guidelines that will be used by teachers all over the state in assembling PASS collections.

Teacher preparation programs and the requirements for continuing professional development have been somewhat influenced by STEP teachers' experiences with the verification process. In various work groups of teacher education faculty, STEP findings have been shared and STEP teachers have in some cases facilitated discussion groups on the experience of teaching in a standards-based system. Training materials that have been developed in the process of working with STEP teachers are being modified for use in pre-service coursework and practica. STEP teachers have also presented to classes of pre-service teachers in some of the preparation programs around the state. Performance assessment for initial and continuing licensure has been adopted for statewide implementation in all teacher education institutions as part of the policy requiring program redesign. This performance assessment will be revised to include evidence of a teacher's ability to teach to a standard, generate student work samples, and make judgments about the level of student progress towards the standard.

The Oregon University System through PASS is currently engaged in a collaborative planning effort with the Oregon Department of Education to determine the professional development framework that is needed to support standard-based teaching and learning. This professional development framework includes training and support materials generated from the work of STEP teachers as they participated in the cycle of activities during the second year of the study. This includes the framework for targeting specific standards for teaching and learning, planning instruction and assessment around that target, teaching with a variety of strategies to ensure student progress toward that standard, assessing student learning across time with multiple measures, verifying their judgements of student proficiency with other team members through the cross-scoring of student work and reflecting upon their experiences. Teachers who participated in STEP and PASS are frequently called upon to serve in leadership roles on district and state level committees that are being charged with the further development and refinement of professional development frameworks as well as standards and assessments.

Finally, the voices of teachers that describe the challenges and possibilities of standards implementation are gaining the attention of educational leaders throughout the system. The implementation successes and failures of teachers provide a reference for future planning and development efforts across participating agencies. As Oregon struggles with the

challenges of implementing standards across the K-16 system, we would be wise to keep avenues open in the policy, teacher preparation and professional development arenas for the active participation of teachers who will ultimately serve as agents of successful implementation.

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